

214. Regular Session. Transnational Politics: New Perspectives
Palais des congrès de Montréal, 510A, 10:30am-12:10pm

The Influence of International Relations on Democratization, 1972 – 2005. *Mathias De Roeck; Ronan Van Rossem, Ghent University*

Sociological institutionalism argues international relations (IR) foster the diffusion of democracy. IR expose countries to Western culture and provide blueprints for modern actorhood. The sheer interest for 'normative isomorphism,' however, diverts attention from institutional divergence and coercion. We present a network approach to explain democratic transitions during the third wave of democratization (1972 – 2005). States are embedded in a global system of dependence relations rather than a Western cultural environment. Dependence on democratic partners leads to resource concerns and facilitates the diffusion of democracy. Yet, the impact of democratic dependence is conditional upon the concentration of (im)material resources. Networks constrain when alternatives are few, but enable when they become vast. While resources were concentrated during (and right after) the Cold War, a dramatic shift occurred afterwards. Globalization precipitated the dispersal of power beyond the West. Market-authoritarianism, furthermore, downplayed the legitimacy of democratic scripts. This paper argues that globalization and authoritarian models of 'rationalized actorhood' undermine democracy diffusion after the Cold War. Making use of longitudinal network data on economic, political and military dependence ties for a global sample of states, and a new approach to studying political regimes, we find that democratic dependence positively affects the likelihood of democratic transitions. After the Cold War, however, the positive effect of democratic networks declines or disappears, reducing the risk of democratization. The findings are robust to alternative specifications of democratic transitions. They shed new light on the relationship between IR and democratization during democracy's third wave.